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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/01/2031

TAGS: PARM PREL ETTC AG IR IT

SUBJECT: AUSTRALIA GROUP: ITALIAN PARTICIPATION IN PLENARY INFORMATION EXCHANGE AND EXPERTS ENFORCEMENT MEETINGS

REF: A. STATE 70409

1B. ROME 1194

1C. ROME 933

Classified By: Acting Minister Counselor for Economic Affairs Richard B Oly, Reasons 1.4 B, D, and H

11. (S) A/EcMin delivered reftel talking points to Carlo Tripepi, MFA DAS-equivalent official responsible for Australia Group (AG) issues. Tripepi said that he will attend the Australia Group Plenary in Paris, and that the Italian delegation will come prepared to "speak, hear, and discuss." Tripepi told us the GOI will give presentations on Libyan and Iranian procurement networks in the information exchange and enforcement experts sessions. The GOI will also deliver a technical paper on animal pathogens. Tripepi noted that because of the nature of the AG framework, "it is only possible to share one-third of what we know," and noted the USG and GOI continue to share AG-related information through other channels.

12. (S) Tripepi said the GOI shares USG concerns about Iranian attempts to obtain AG-controlled substances. "The Institute Pasteur of Tehran is our first enemy," according to Tripepi, and uses a network of front companies in its attempts to purchase AG-controlled substances. When A/EcMin asked if Tripepi knew of attempts by Iranian entities to obtain biological products from Italian cosmetics or pharmaceutical firms, he said the GOI had denied an export license for the export of an unusually large quantity of depilatory products. Tripepi noted requests to export AG-controlled substances from Italy to Iran are almost universally denied.

13. (C) On the issue of Russian efforts to join the AG, Tripepi restated his position (refs B and C) that Russia is not ready to join the AG because Russia does not satisfy the criteria for membership. Tripepi said the GOR will not submit an application to join "until they are guaranteed admission" because the GOR does not want to run the risk of having its application for membership rejected. Tripepi had no comment on the reorganization of GOR ministries and its effect on oversight of Russia's chemical and biological weapons (CBW) facilities. In previous meetings, Tripepi characterized oversight of Russian CBW facilities as inadequate, and cited it as one of the reasons that Russia is not yet ready for AG membership.

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